

Marketing Committee - Annual Report 2018

The goal of the marketing committee should be first and foremost to lead and assist GolfNL in driving more revenue for golf operators in the province. We can reach this goal via a two-fold path that involves increasing local participation in the game (i.e., more rounds from residents) and tapping the lucrative tourism market.

Atlantic Canada is gaining profile as a golf destination and there's no reason NL can't take advantage of this. Each of the above-mentioned approaches will require a focused strategy, with the first providing the greatest opportunity. The process is a marathon and not a sprint, and will require a better long-term vision and tighter collaboration between all involved. Much of the discussion and action within the marketing committee this year has centered around how we can establish this. Though there's no quick fix, six solid months of good summer weather each and every year would help the cause!

Below are some of the related initiatives that the Marketing Committee have undertaken throughout the year, as well as some other standard initiatives.

Strategic Marketing Plan

As stated above, this initiative was the focus for 2018. The Marketing Committee and Executive Director expanded on a briefing document that was drafted in 2017 and engaged in a series of meetings with the provincial government and ACOA. After an initial consultation with ACOA, GolfNL met with the Department of Tourism to see if there was any interest in offering support to GolfNL. The Executive Director and Marketing Committee Chair met with the Department of Tourism. After walking them through our briefing document, it became abundantly clear that interest was low. They cited exit survey data that showed golf was not a desired activity among tourists who visited the province in 2016 (less than 5% of visitors identified it as an activity they engaged in while visiting). It's the committee's opinion that this data is somewhat flawed, as it did not take into account the internal audience — NLers vacationing at home — which we feel could represent a significant opportunity for growth. However, due to the lack of interest from the department in supporting golf as part of the tourism experience, it was decided that we focus on working with ACOA. Another meeting was then arranged with ACOA and we are pleased to announce that they approved our application and agreed to fund 50% of the cost of the development of a three-year Strategic Plan. Once approval has been received, Golf NL will develop and circulate a Terms of Reference (TOR) to a number of marketing firms to assist in the creation of the strategy in conjunction and consultation with the membership and the Board. The Marketing Committee will continue to lobby the Tourism Division for support and will be requesting a meeting with provincial government officials to address our concerns regarding the lack of support for golf.

Annual Golf Guide/Rack Card

In 2018, GolfNL created and circulated a Rack Card that replaced the annual Golf Guide. This Rack Card includes a list of all of the members, telephone number and website address, and has become a very accepted marketing tool for the industry. It was circulated to all of the Visitor Information Centres, member courses, key hotels and other locations across the province.

Signature Photograph

The Marketing Committee and Executive Director decided that it would be beneficial to designate a signature golf photograph that would lead our brand image. This can come in handy in several areas: Most importantly, it presents a memorable brand experience and allows for greater consistency throughout our materials. A stunning aerial shot of the number ten hole at Humber Valley Resort was selected as the winning photograph.

Promotional Materials

Many of GolfNL's re-occurring marketing collateral pieces that support the promotion of tournament and events were redesigned in 2018, a simplified layout was employed to better communicate the content. Idea Factory lead the design changes of these materials which include:

- All Tournament Posters (Amateur, High School, Junior High School, Junior)
- Member Benefits Poster redesigned

This year also marked the introduction of a 2-for-1 Go Golf Card, which was undertaken as a pilot program to promote golf across the province and increase revenue to participating member courses. It was a printed card that employed a peel 'n' stick coupon style system and sold for \$50. There were ten courses participating in the program with 32 cards purchased throughout the season. While the concept of the card was well received it was evident that in order to be attractive it would require a number of other courses. As such, GolfNL is currently working to redevelop the card for 2019 with the possible inclusion of a number of additional courses.

Website

As a significant website upgrade was undertaken in 2017, much of 2018 activity focused on updating and enhancing content. GolfNL has continued to update the information and achieved the goal of one post per week to keep the content fresh and relevant. The organization will continue to utilize this platform to promote and market the member courses.

Provincial Travel Guide Advertisement

Golf NL took advantage of a no cost full-page ad in the Provincial Travel Guide again this year. The ad was redesigned and simplified and it featured our new signature shot, the tenth hole at Humber Valley resort. New creative was developed by Idea Factory to better align with the image the province is showcasing through its own tourism advertising.

Monthly e-Newsletter

The monthly e-Newsletter continued to be distributed throughout the year to the GolfNL database of approximately 8,000 unique users. The e-Newsletter was broken into two content streams - content developed by GolfNL and promotions provided by member courses. A decision was made during the third quarter of 2017 to discontinue our relationship with *The Grain Magazine*. A restructuring of the compensation model for use of the GolfNL user database by The Grain Magazine was deemed to be not in the best interest of GolfNL and its Membership. During 2018, there were seven newsletters distributed with an average open rate of 17.2% for emails and an average distribution to 5,920 users.

Golf NL Social Media

Golf NL continued to utilize Facebook and Twitter as a mechanism for communicating events and news items to its followers. Articles, updates, photos and information related to provincial golf activities were

published throughout the year. Both Facebook and Twitter followings for GolfNL showed modest growth: 727 (+57) and 508 (+101) respectively.

In July of 2018, we also launched a new Instagram page. As a social media platform, Instagram offers access to a younger demographic. It is a fast-growing platform showing a 50%+ increase in accounts within NL since December 2016. As of Winter 2018, there were 130,000 user accounts, of which 52% are aged 18-30. Instagram is an influencer channel which the Department of Tourism has a close eye on. As it is a highly visually platform where good photographic content is a must, it was requested that courses capture quality photos/beauty shots of course conditions throughout summer that we could share on the platform to gain a following. Response to the request was somewhat disappointing: we have yet to leverage this channel (six posts) and currently we have 158 followers. A content plan has been drafted, however, and with a little attention — and a modest paid promotional strategy — we hope to significantly increase our followers over the next 12 months. Instagram is a channel the Department of Tourism leverages quite well and the committee believes it will serve us well to develop our presence here.

Weekly Golf Report

This year, weekly reports ran in the Telegram from June 15th to September 5th with a total of 15 weekly reports. Content for the full page featured local experts discussing rules, etiquette, golf tips and other helpful advice. A number of courses provided information and content for feature stories and news briefs with a section of the page devoted to coming events at member courses. The Telegram is very pleased with the performance of the golf page and looks forward to a continued strong relationship in 2019.

Kids & Family Expo

GolfNL, in Partnership with Glendenning, Clovelly and Terra Nova Resort, participated in the Kids & Family Expo hosted at the Techniplex in St. John's from June 2nd to 3rd, 2018. The goal of this interactive event is to increase awareness of individual sports by allowing people to participate in the activities. The GolfNL booth included a driving area, putting green and display booth with general information on golf throughout the province. The event attracted over 10,000 patrons.

Thank You Committee Members

This past year the committee consisted of Ed Roche, Steve Wedgwood, Lee Puddister and the Executive Director. Thank you for supporting GolfNL.